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## PSYCHOLOGY FOR PREACHERS.

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A SIGNIFICANT sign of the times is the widespread conviction that certain radical changes should be made in the curriculum of our divinity schools. Among other things, a prominent place is to be assigned to psychology. This is a fortunate choice. The new study of applied psychology, once thoroughly understood and intelligently practiced, will of itself accomplish wonders. It means the transfer of emphasis from the world of books to the world of men, from the abstract to the concrete, and from the speculative to the practical. Ever since the Civil War, when pastor and people were brought into closest touch by the stress of the times, this movement manward on the part of the ministry has steadily gained in favor. The relation of pastor and people is becoming every year more rational and scriptural. What is lacking to make the relation an ideal one is the infusion of the helpful principles of psychology.

It is well known that psychology is doing great things for the cause of education. Our foremost educators recognize it as the most important of the sciences that contribute principles to the work of the teacher, securing a more accurate acquaintance with the mental faculties and better educational rules than those now in vogue. And why should not psychology prove of even greater value to the preacher as his work strikes deeper into the moral and spiritual nature of man? We have so long been occupied with other books, surely it would prove of greatest value to pay some attention to the great book of human experience. As there is always a way to sink the proudest fleet that floats, so there is a key to every heart, there is a door to every man's soul, could we but find it. In a word, the lack heretofore has been adaptation, speaking the right word in the right way and at the right

time. The eye-gate, the ear-gate, as well as the citadel of the stubborn fortress of Mansoul has not always been skilfully approached and patiently besieged in order to secure a capitulation in behalf of Shaddai.

And here our divine Master, as in other directions, set us a perfect example. With the swift intuition of his celestial genius he instantly grasped the significance of every situation and weighed every life as in a balance; hence he was able, with infallible accuracy, to apply the needed spiritual truth. The signal success of St. Paul, too, may be traced, next to his inspiration, to that marvelous insight and ready tact which enabled him to be "all things to all men," feeding some with milk and others with solid food. The truth is, the Bible is the best textbook on psychology in the world, its specialty is the soul of man, it understands him through and through. Not that its psychology is of the formal, academic sort, any more than is its theology, but it is there, nevertheless, lending an undying human quality and a unique interest to its pages. Jotham's parable, Nathan's story of the ewe lamb, Elijah's mockery of the priests of Baal, our Lord's parables, the sermons of the book of Acts—these and countless other portions of the Scriptures are as psychologically consistent as they are spiritually true. The truth is designed for the soul, as is the light for the eye. In the spiritual realm cause and effect, antecedent and consequent, hold sway; there is measure and order in the inner world, making it possible to work toward a given end.

Let it be carefully noted that psychology does not presume to supplant the divine side of the Christian life, or explain away the mystery of conversion; but it does aim to gain a better understanding of the human side, to the end that the life of God may have freer access, do more thorough work, and shine forth in a nobler type of manhood and womanhood than would be otherwise possible. It is therefore entirely in place for the minister to study his own mind, compare his experience with that of many others, see what is fundamental in them all, and thus formulate general laws.

A minister thus equipped will first of all gain in definiteness

of touch, consistency of impression, and accuracy of aim in all his public ministrations. Being perfectly sure of himself, he speedily gets a firm grip on his congregation, interpreting its spiritual needs, electrifying the indifferent into attention, and harmonizing all to think his thoughts after him. A good psychologist is sure to prove a skilful master of assemblies. All successful evangelists are apt psychologists. And not only does the preacher himself profit by a knowledge of this study, but even greater is the profit to the congregation. An unfailing freshness and uplift characterize properly conducted meetings, even though the people may not analyze just what it was that held them spell-bound.

Still further, the pastor who is a good psychologist is in a position to discriminate accurately between the genuine and the spurious Christian life. So widely diffused is the knowledge of doctrine, so accessible is church membership, that many consider it worse than useless to try to separate the tares from the wheat, greatly to the detriment of the church. Here is where psychology comes to the rescue with its keen analysis of consciousness, its doctrine of the unity of personality, the reality of the inner world of thought and purpose, so that the house of the soul cannot be divided against itself, nor the secret sin flatly contradict the outward profession, without the whole structure being endangered. Psychology is the death-blow of hypocrisy. Once show that the soul of every man is absolutely subject to eternal laws which demand sincerity and consistency on his part, and the days of self-deception will be numbered. The future battles of the church, so far as its own purity is concerned, will be fought out on the arena of man's soul. The question will be asked, with increasing eagerness: What is the content of Christian consciousness? What effect is produced upon the intellect, the sensibilities, and the will? What new relations are formed, and what changes wrought in the tone and temper of the personality?

Psychology throws a flood of light on the motives involved and the emotions aroused by conversion. It notes each step from the first awful sense of sin to the final state of assured peace. The problem of the evening service, the prayer-meeting,

the choir, and many other puzzling problems will doubtless receive a satisfactory solution when once the nature of the soul and its necessary workings are better understood.

Meanwhile, it is evident that all this requires an intensely practical training in the interest of the future pastor. Not one moment may he lose himself in profitless day-dreams, or in idle speculations. He must ever keep before him the actual needs of the persons he wishes to influence, study them, and still more carefully study the soul-life as mirrored in the Word of God. What will so quickly banish the sordid secularism of the times, create a vivid sense of the reality of spiritual things, and deepen the religious life of the church, next to the outpouring of God's Spirit, as the rediscovery of the soul? And in this fascinating study all who wish may share.